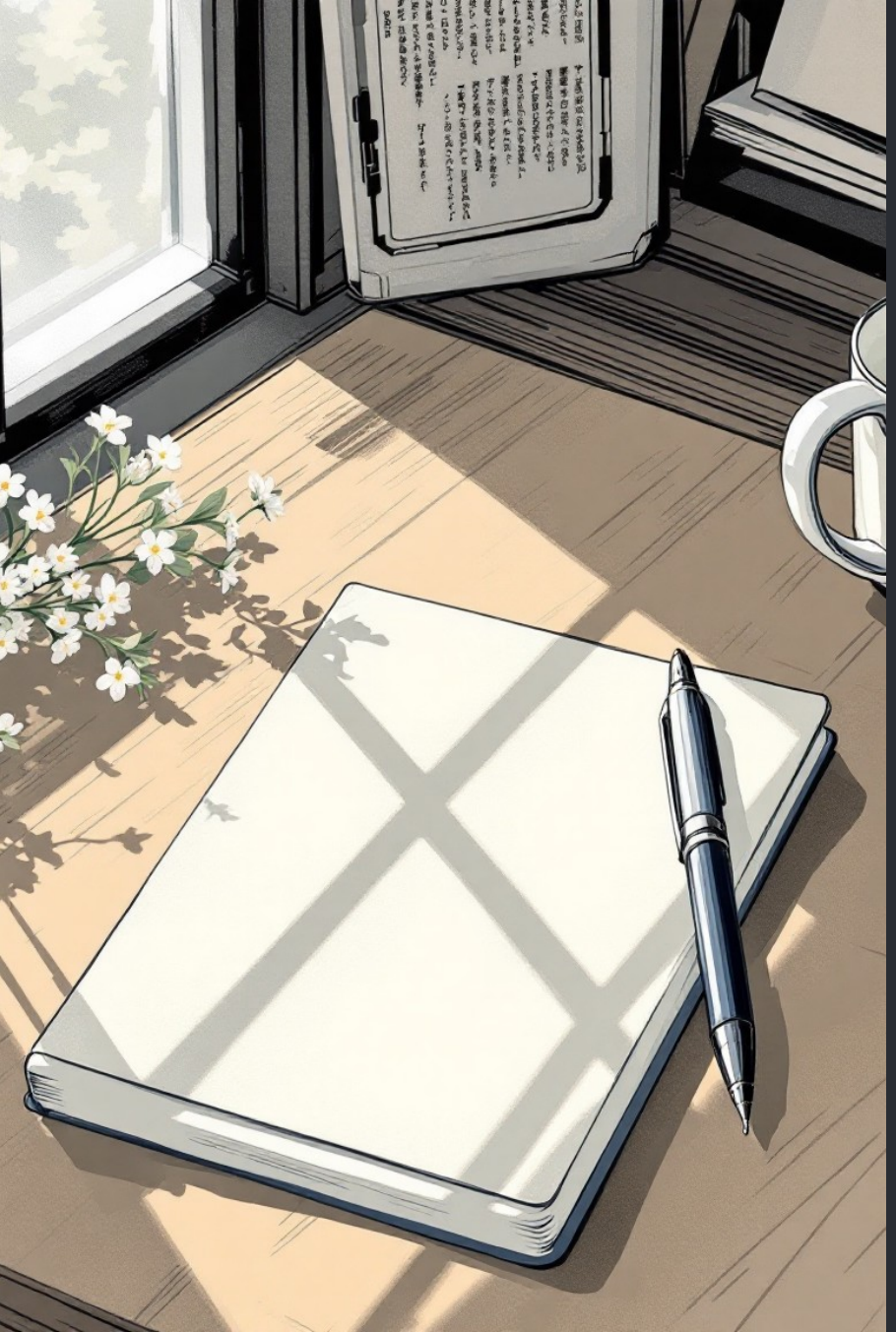
Find your partner

You'll work together all afternoon. If you aren't seated side by side, please move so you are.

David Braemer Kent Denver School	**Andrew Watson** Fountain Valley School
Mike Davis Colorado Academy	**Steve Bileca** Vail Mountain School
Iswari Natarajan St. Mary's Academy	**Jeff Leahy** Colorado Rocky Mountain School
Josh Cobb Graland Country Day School	**Holly Warren** The Rivendell School of Northern Colorado
Chris Cox St. Anne's Episcopal School	**Jo Nesbit** The McClelland School
Sumant Bhat Stanley British Primary School	**Jonathan Fouser** Telluride Mountain School
Jonathan Schoenwald Dawson School	**Beth Ellis** Eagle Rock School
Robin Frank Boulder Country Day School	**Kabe ErkenBrack** Evergreen Country Day School

Tracy Halgren Watershed School	**Michelle Rogers** Montessori School of Evergreen
Meg Gardner Shining Mountain Waldorf School	**Julie Bragdon** Montessori School of Denver
Kelly Molinet The Denver Waldorf School	**Bo Adams** Mackintosh Academy
Kia Abdool The Logan School for Creative Learning	**Ivan Johnson** Friends School
Roberto d'Erizans International School of Denver	**Nina Lopez** Bixby School
Nicky Freeburg Escuela de Guadalupe	**Jessica Ross** Havern School
Alan Smiley ACIS	**Hayley Harang** Paddington Station Preschool

Partner not here yet? Join the pair next to you.



Crucial Conversations: Leading Through the Talks You've Been Avoiding

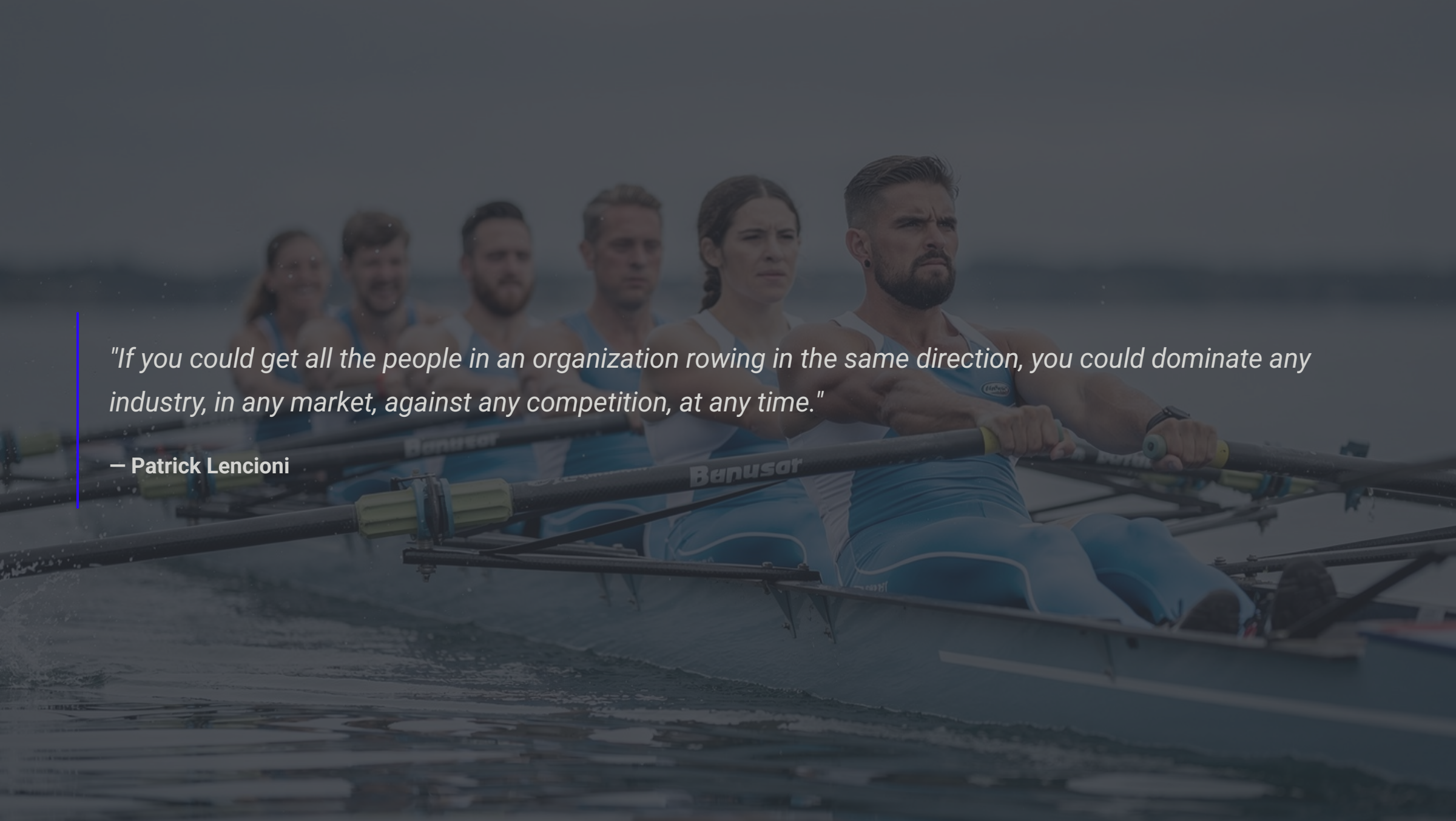
ACIS Heads' Roundtable · October 15, 2026

> Before we begin: think of a hard conversation you've been putting off. Who is it with? What's getting in the way?
>
> Write it down. We're going to use it all afternoon.

Welcome

This session is **all about application.**
We have **two hours.**

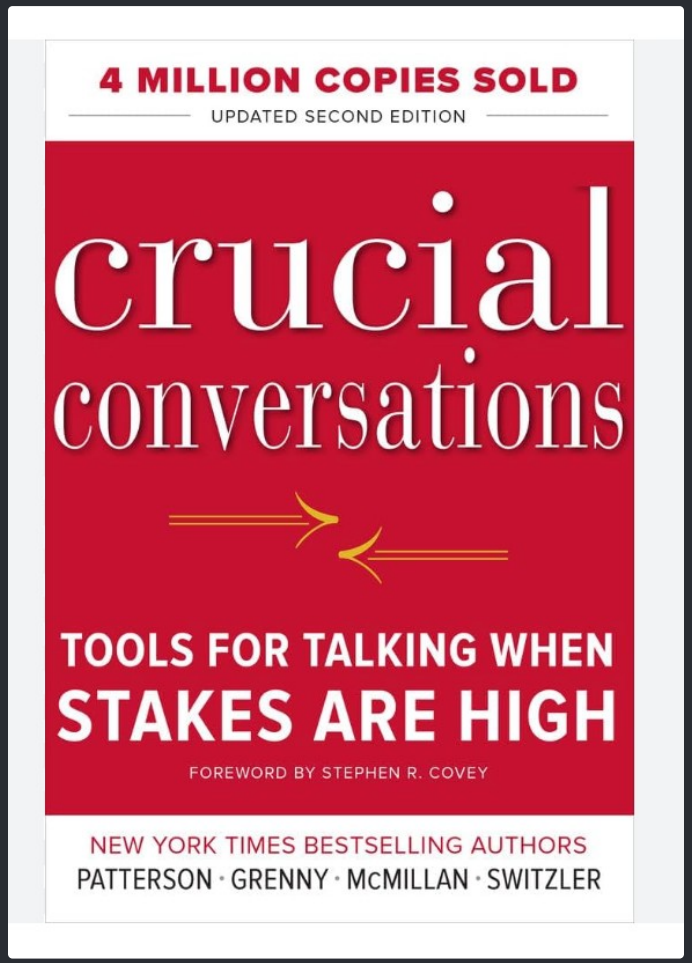
We want the one conversation you've been putting off **planned, practiced, and ready to schedule.**



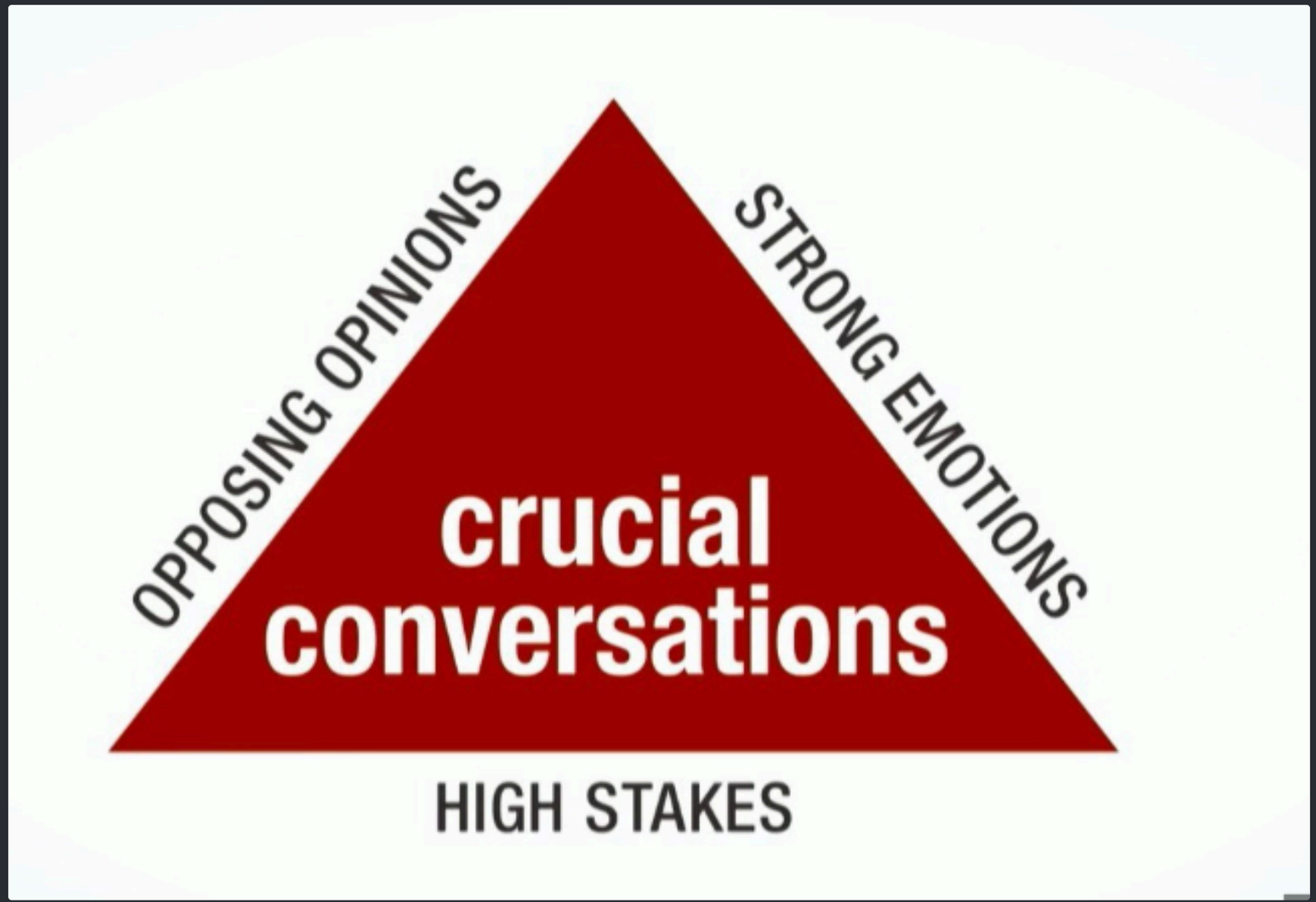
> *"If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time."*
>
> **— Patrick Lencioni**

How teams break




4 MILLION COPIES SOLD
UPDATED SECOND EDITION
crucial conversations
TOOLS FOR TALKING WHEN STAKES ARE HIGH
FOREWORD BY STEPHEN R. COVEY
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHORS
PATTERSON · GRENNY · McMILLAN · SWITZLER

So what makes a conversation crucial?



Meet your partner

Take turns:

1. Where you grew up
2. Number of siblings and where you fall in the birth order
3. Your worst job
4. A unique challenge from your childhood

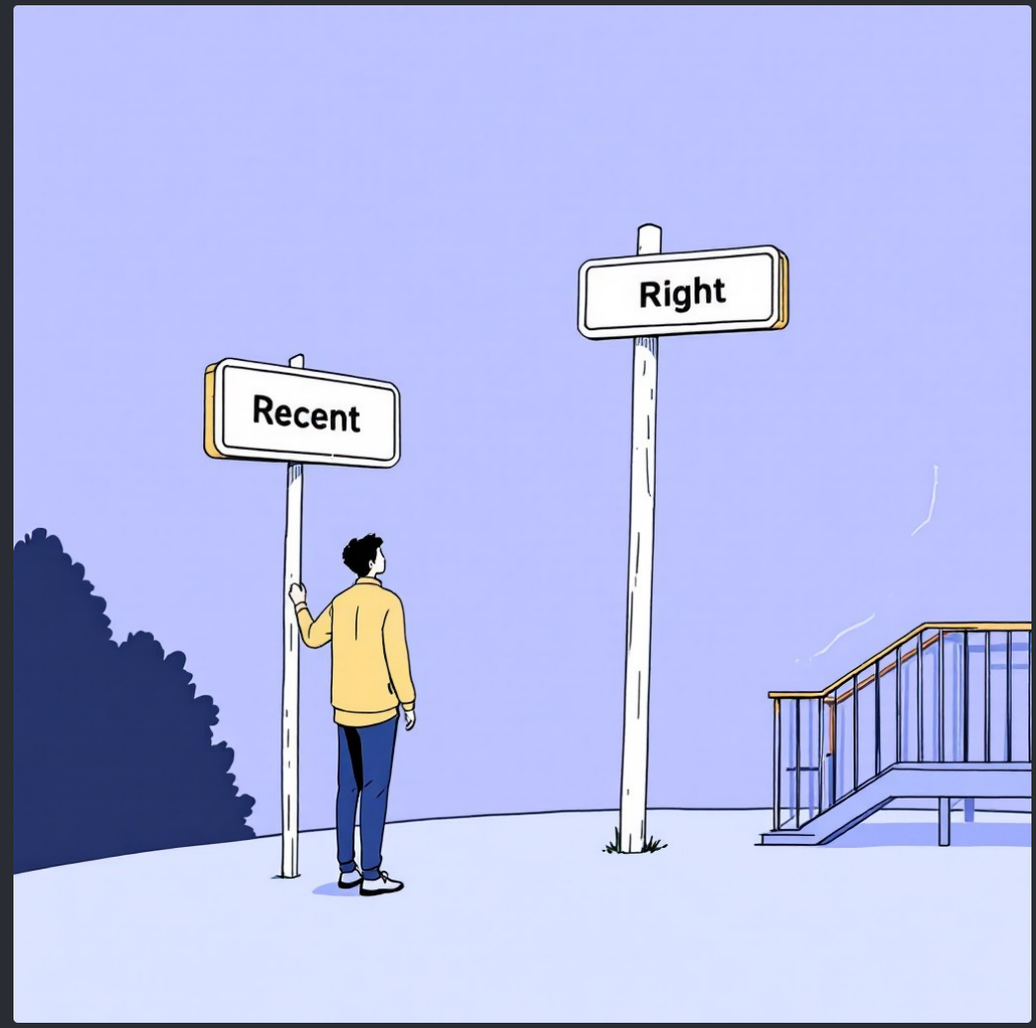
Listen In



How we pick the wrong topic



The easy topic instead of the real one



The latest incident instead of the pattern

CPR

Content:	what just happened
Pattern:	what keeps happening
Relationship:	what it's doing to trust between you

Unbundle your conversation

Take turns:

- **Speaker:** describe the conversation you intend to have
- **Together:** What's the content? The pattern? The relationship? Which one is the real conversation?

Switch roles when I call time

Bookmarking

Acknowledge it. Park it. Come back to it.

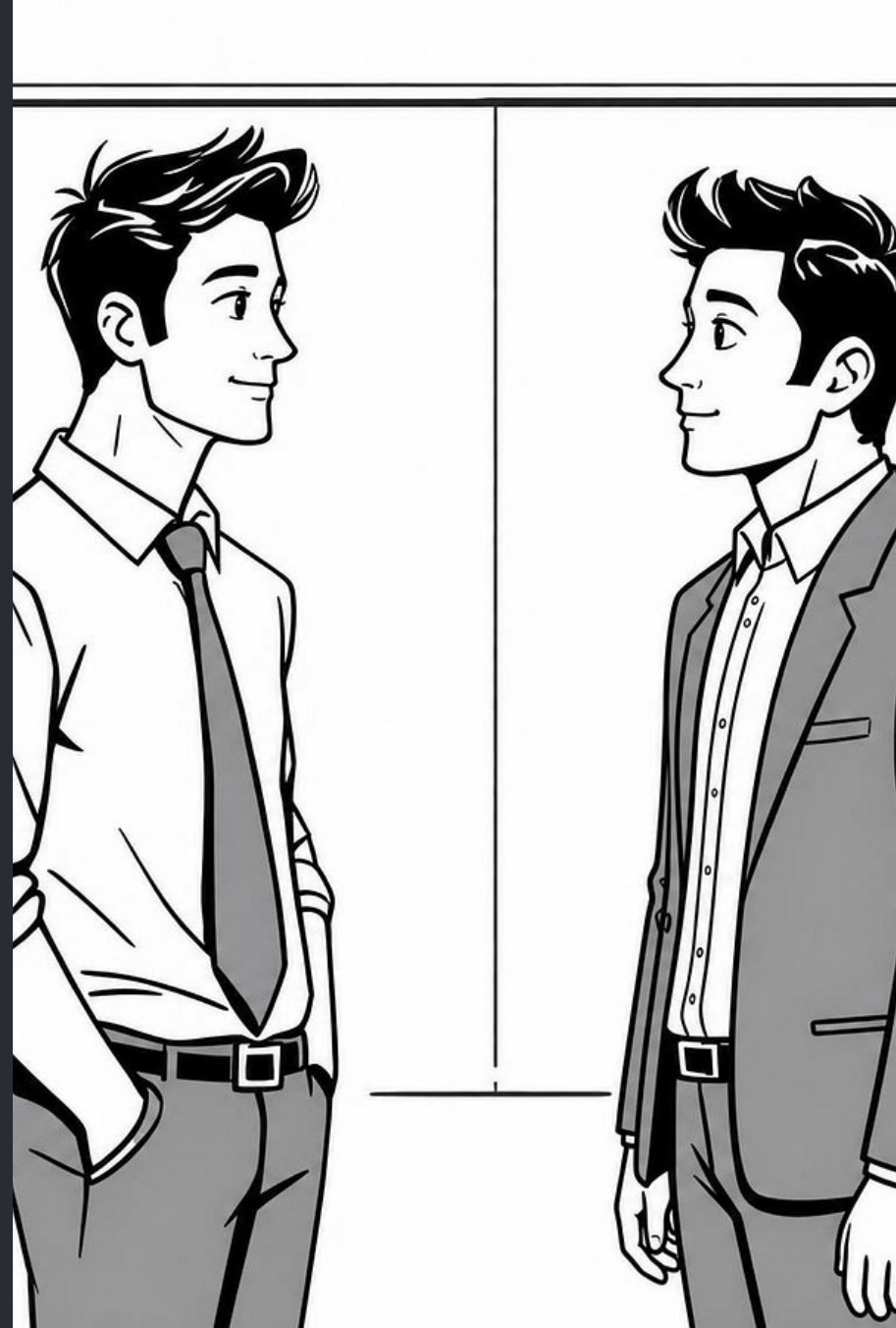
> "That's an important point, and I don't want to lose it. Can we come back to it as soon as we finish this part?"



Replay 1: Jordan bookmarks



Replay 2: Pat bookmarks



Practice bookmarking

Take turns:

01

Speaker:

set the scene, using the level you chose with CPR

02

Partner:

play the other person. Raise real, related concerns that would pull the conversation off track

03

Speaker:

bookmark. Acknowledge, park, come back

04

Partner:

if the bookmark is sincere, honor it

05

Trios:

the third person writes down the exact words of every bookmark

What worked?

- What words worked?
- What felt awkward?
- What did you learn about your conversation?

What happens when emotions spike



See & hear

Feel

Act

The hidden step



See & hear

Tell a story

Feel

Act

Watch for clever stories

Villain

Victim

Helpless



Examine your story

Take turns:

- **Speaker:** What emotions come up when you picture this conversation? What story are you telling yourself about the other person?
- **Partner:** Help separate fact (what actually happened) from story (what's been added)
- **Together:** Why would a reasonable, rational, decent person do what this person did?

Switch roles when I call time

Start with Heart

- What do I really want for myself?
- What do I really want for the other person?
- What do I really want for the relationship?

Now, write your own opening line.



Now flip it

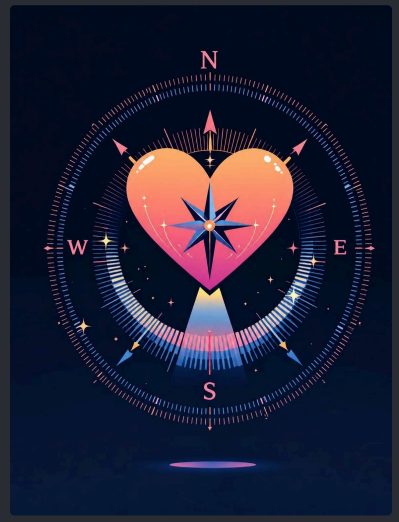
What have the people on your team learned about what happens when they're honest with you?

Take it to your team

Three tangible things to bring home:



Personal histories: 10 minutes at your next leadership team meeting



CPR and Start With Heart: teach them in a 15-minute block, using a real example



Your one-page field guide

Commit

Your conversation

Your opening line

Your date

Close

"The goal isn't perfection. The goal is staying in dialogue."



Amol Tripathi

CEO & Leadership Team Strategic Advisor

Former Investment Committee Chair and Primary Day School Trustee, Bethesda, MD

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